

NEWS



THE MARINERS' MUSEUM

Contact: David Hall, NOAA
(240) 393-8267
Email: David.L.Hall@noaa.gov
LT Sara Olsen, MDSU2
(757) 462-3442
Email: solsen@mdsu2.navy.mil
Justin Lyons, The Mariners' Museum
(757) 591-7738 or (800) 581-7245
Email: pr@mariner.org

NOAA04-R456
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 23, 2004

NOAA, U.S. NAVY RETURN TO WRECK OF CIVIL WAR IRONCLAD USS MONITOR

Continuing the partnership that resulted in the successful recovery of the USS *Monitor*'s famous gun turret in 2002, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Navy have returned to NOAA's *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary off the North Carolina coast to assess the current condition of the wreck of the Civil War ironclad and recover artifacts that may have been exposed by Hurricane Isabel. Recovered items will be transported to The Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Va. for conservation. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

"NOAA is proud to join forces with the U.S. Navy and The Mariners' Museum once again to preserve and protect the *Monitor* for future generations," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "We are especially grateful to the men and women of the USS *Grasp* and Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two, who are assisting NOAA archaeologists during this year's *Monitor* expedition."

Surface-supplied Navy divers operating from the Norfolk, Va.-based USS *Grasp* are working with NOAA archaeologists and historians to assess the condition of the *Monitor* following the 2002 turret recovery operation and Hurricane Isabel, which caused severe damage to nearby Cape Hatteras, N.C., in September 2003. During the two-week mission, which concludes June 30, the NOAA-Navy team also plans to explore the *Monitor*'s recently-discovered pilot house, from which the ironclad's captain commanded the vessel; examine any remaining machinery used to rotate the now-recovered gun turret; and recover artifacts that may have been uncovered by tidal forces associated with Hurricane Isabel.

"As with previous *Monitor* expeditions, the U.S. Navy is providing invaluable support and expertise for our ongoing *Monitor* preservation and documentation efforts," said *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary Manager John D. Broadwater. "The Mariners' Museum continues to play a vital role in conserving artifacts recovered from the technological marvel that is the *Monitor*."

“The USS *Grasp* has provided assistance in previous Monitor expeditions, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this year’s expedition,” said CDR (SEL) Brian C. Moum, *Grasp*’s Commanding Officer.

“I dove on the *Monitor* in 1995 while assisting NOAA aboard USS *Edenton*,” said CAPT (SEL) William Robertson, commanding officer of Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two. “I am looking forward to working with NOAA again on this famous shipwreck.”

“We are very pleased once again to be partnering with NOAA and the U.S. Navy to receive any artifacts that may be recovered from the wreck site of the USS *Monitor*,” said The Mariners’ Museum President and CEO, John B. Hightower. “As our conservation team continues its work on hundreds of Monitor artifacts already recovered, we welcome the opportunity to add to the collection that will ultimately be on display to the public in the \$30 million USS *Monitor* Center opening March 9, 2007.”

The USS *Monitor* sank in 1862 in turbulent waters approximately 16 miles off Cape Hatteras. Discovered in 1973 in 240 feet of water, the wreck became the nation’s first national marine sanctuary in 1975. In 1987 NOAA designated The Mariners’ Museum as the repository for artifacts and archives from the USS *Monitor*.

Since then, The Mariners’ Museum has received more than 1,500 artifacts from the *Monitor*, including the steam engine in 2001 and the revolving gun turret in 2002. The Mariners’ Museum, in partnership with *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary, is working to develop the USS *Monitor* Center, which will become the definitive national authority and repository for materials, research and programming related to the history of the famous ironclad—and the larger story of the naval history of the Civil War.

The Mariners’ Museum, an educational, non-profit institution accredited by the American Association of Museums, preserves and interprets maritime history through an international collection of ship models, figureheads, paintings and other maritime artifacts.

Based in Little Creek, Va., the USS *Grasp* belongs to a new class of rescue and salvage vessels constructed for the U.S. Navy. At 255 ft in length and displacing more than 3,200 tons, the USS *Grasp* has a range of 6,900 nautical miles with a cruising speed of 8 knots. The ship’s mission includes heavy lifting from the ocean depths, manned diving operations, and the rescue and towing of other vessels.

Located at Naval Amphibious Base in Little Creek, Va., Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two’s mission is to provide highly mobile, fully trained and equipped detachments to perform sea-based and expeditionary diving and salvage operations in support of the second, fifth and sixth fleets. This mission includes recovery operations, retractions, battle damage assessment and repair and harbor clearance.

NOAA’s National Marine Sanctuary Program, which manages *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary, seeks to increase the public awareness of America’s maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, the sanctuary program manages 13 national marine sanctuaries and one coral reef ecosystem reserve that encompass more than 150,000 square miles of America’s ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

NOAA's National Ocean Service manages the NMSP and is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving and restoring the nation's coasts and oceans. The National Ocean Service balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

NOAA – <http://www.noaa.gov>

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary – <http://monitor.noaa.gov>

U.S. Navy – <http://www.navy.mil>

Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two - <http://www.cnsi.spear.navy.mil/mdsu2>

The Mariners' Museum – <http://www.mariner.org>

USS Monitor Center – <http://www.monitorcenter.org>